

# Congressman **Rahm Emanuel**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 27, 2003**

*WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Representative Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) released the following remarks today at a press conference today with Illinois Governor Rod R. Blagojevich as the Governor released the findings of a study he commissioned in mid-September on the potential cost-savings and feasibility of reimbursing state employees and retirees for prescription drugs purchased from Canada, where prices are significantly lower. Illinois' team of pharmaceutical and regulatory experts found that – if the federal Food and Drug Administration approved – the state could set up an importation system with safety checks equal to or greater than Illinois' current pharmaceutical system and achieve savings of up to \$90.7 million.*

"I am proud to stand with Governor Blagojevich today as he takes another bold step to protect the taxpayers, state employees and retirees of Illinois from skyrocketing prescription drug prices. This study validates what millions of Americans already know – that taking advantage of world market prices for prescription drugs saves money.

We now know that purchasing drugs from Canada for state employees and retirees can save 91 million dollars – savings that will be felt by state employees and all Illinois taxpayers. And, this study confirms that importation from Canada is safe – in fact, in some ways Canada's safety precautions are even stricter than those in Illinois. In a time of tough budget times in Illinois, this type of savings could keep police officers *on* the street, and keep essential education programs in *our* schools.

It is especially important to consider the results of this study as the House and Senate conferees debate the Medicare prescription drug benefit. The hardest part about finalizing a Medicare bill that can pass both the House and Senate is finding a way to provide a good benefit while controlling costs. I think that spending \$400 billion of taxpayer money without providing affordable prescription drugs or making sure that you are spending this money wisely is irresponsible. That's why I hope that the Medicare conferees look carefully at the results of this study, and realize that drug importation can make a difference in the type of Medicare benefit we can offer, and make a difference in the burden on taxpayers.

We can now provide the FDA with hard numbers and solid facts demonstrating that the safety concerns they raised in objection to Illinois' interest in importing drugs from Canada are exaggerated and unfounded. The potential savings available to cash-strapped states and struggling consumers obliges the FDA to stop protecting drug-makers' profits and standing in the way of states that want to move forward with importation plans.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that my reimportation bill would lower total prescription drug spending for all public and private purchasers by \$40.4 billion over 10 years, and reduce direct federal spending for prescription drugs by \$2.9 billion over 10 years. Between the CBO savings and the Governor's study we are well on our way to proving that importation of prescription drugs saves money and is safe.

I also hope that these results encourage other states and cities to join Illinois as well as Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan, and Springfield, Massachusetts in taking on unfair drug prices head on. Momentum is on our side. I applaud the Governor for this study and for his great commitment to the people of Illinois."

###